

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from New Hampshire.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Madam President, I would ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume consideration of the MacBride nomination until 6 p.m. and that at 6 p.m. the Senate vote on confirmation of the Baker and Lewis nominations.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Neil Harvey MacBride, of Virginia, to be General Counsel for the Department of the Treasury.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. For the information of the Senate, we expect to line up to three additional votes this evening. Therefore, Senators should expect a series of up to five rollcall votes beginning at 6 p.m. Senators are asked to vote from their desks after the first vote so we can move these along and not spend all night here.

CONTINUING RESOLUTION

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Madam President, I am actually on the floor to speak to a different issue, even though I think expediting votes is an important one, and I support that.

But I am really here to highlight the negative consequences for our country of continuing to fund our government through continuing resolutions.

One of the most basic constitutional duties of Congress is the appropriations process. The Nation relies on this body to provide Federal funds for programs that support national defense, small businesses, our border defenses, conservation of public lands, food assistance for low-income families, and so much, much more.

And as a long-serving Member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I am extremely disappointed that Congress is about to pass yet another CR that is going to take us to March 11, nearly 5 months past the start of the fiscal year.

Now, on a positive note, I understand that there is a tentative agreement on top-line funding, so that we should have budget numbers for an omnibus that would fund the remainder of the fiscal year. And that is good news. But the fundamental problem remains; long-term CRs create uncertainty and inefficiencies inside and outside of the Federal Government.

CRs prevent Agencies from issuing new grants or expanding programs. They curtail hiring and recruitment. And moreover, those who rely on government programs and Federal resources—and that could be either SNAP recipients or defense contractors, but everyone is forced into a budgetary limbo.

And simply put, when Congress refuses to act, people can't do their jobs,

and this is especially true for our military men and women who are serving.

From Russia's efforts to undermine democracies in Europe to China's rapidly expanding sphere of influence, to the unpredictable threat of rogue actors like North Korea and Iran, the threats we face today are varied and numerous. And nothing hinders our national security more than funding our national priorities in piecemeal fashion.

Make no mistake, as we are engaged in this crisis right now in Europe, where Russia is on the borders of Ukraine, threatening to invade, we can bet that Vladimir Putin is watching our Congress to see if we can actually get an agreement to get a budget funded for the rest of this year.

Recently, several of my colleagues from the Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense and the Armed Services Committee met with Marine Corps Commandant General Berger to discuss the challenges that are facing the Marines. The message from General Berger was clear: If we continue to fund our government through CRs, it will erode our military readiness, and it will cut training time and impede the maintenance processes we rely on to keep our soldiers safe.

The impact of continued CRs on our military would be wide-ranging, and the negative effects would continue to ripple for years. And we had this experience since I have been here. In 2012 and 2013, when we had the budget cliff, we saw what happened to our military. We saw readiness of our men and women in uniform erode.

Thousands of pilot flight hours would be lost. Critical exercises within our national allies would be canceled. Our overall global presence diminished at a time in which our adversaries are seeking to outcompete us in multiple theaters.

Aircraft like the brandnew KC-46 tankers that we are so proud to have stationed at Pease Air National Guard Base in New Hampshire, they are such a point of pride. They are an invaluable strategic national asset, but they would spend more time on the ground rather than flying the missions that they were designed for.

And submarines, the backbone of our nuclear deterrence and technological overmatch against our adversaries and, by the way, the ships that China is most concerned about, are an instantly recognizable symbol of American military might and the values of our country, they would be sidelined due to maintenance disruptions.

That would have significant impact not just for our readiness but also for places like the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, which has as its responsibility the maintenance and repair of our attack submarines.

So what kind of a signal does it send to adversaries like Russia, as they continue amassing troops on the Ukrainian border and threaten the stability of Europe, when we can't get a budget?

Long-term efforts to recruit and retain the best and brightest to serve in our military would be undone as bonus and incentive pays are cut and overall end-strength numbers decrease by thousands.

Military families would be forced to bear the burden of greater financial uncertainty on top of the many sacrifices that they already make for our country. We would be left with a smaller, less capable force that is demoralized from pay cuts and forced to shoulder greater risks for their safety.

Now, in addition to the harm to our servicemembers and military families, we would also be undermining the critical modernization efforts that we need to keep pace at a time when competitors like China are experiencing technological breakthroughs.

Just 8 months ago, I am sure we all remember that China tested an advanced hypersonic missile that was launched into space before reentering the atmosphere and nearly hitting its target.

This test should serve as a wake-up call about the urgent threat that China's military breakthroughs pose. And if the U.S. research and development efforts are slowed down due to the constraints of operating under a continuing resolution, we will not be able to drive the innovation needed to keep pace with China, let alone regain a convincing advantage.

And make no mistake, Putin isn't the only one watching to see if we can get a budget agreement in this Congress. Xi is also watching from China.

The development of our next-generation fighter to ensure we maintain air superiority in the air will be slowed.

Our efforts to defend against cyber attacks that could cripple critical infrastructure or expose national security secrets would be hamstrung.

Simply put, for all the might and selfless service of our service men and women, we would be asking them to defend us while tying their hands behind their backs simply because we in Congress can't find the courage of compromise.

I would say to my colleague Senator CORNYN from Texas, who talked about the narrow focus of Democrats—who are in the majority in this body right now, very slim majority—worrying only about our own parochial interests, that this is an opportunity for us to work together. Let's work across the aisle and see if we can't find some agreement on budget that will get this done not just for the remaining months of this fiscal year but next year and the next year and the next year.

China doesn't just compete with us on military technology; China and our other economic competitors are pouring resources into scientific and technological innovation. And if we want to sustain our global prosperity, global leadership, and national security, we cannot afford to be caught flatfooted.

That is why last week the House of Representatives passed the America